



## MASTER FILE

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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES # G - 4

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan

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Attention: Decennial Design, Policy and Management Branch

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Subject: Observation of Block Canvassing Lister Training and  
Quality Assurance Training Wave-2

### INTRODUCTION

Block Canvassing is an operation which strives to locate all possible housing units (HUs) for the purpose of updating the Census Bureau's Master Address File. My observation of block canvassing during Wave-2 took me to the Las Vegas Census Office in Clark County, Nevada. I was at this office from Tuesday, February 23, 1999, through Tuesday, March 2, 1999. During my visit, I observed a three day block canvassing lister training session, a Quality Assurance (QA) training session, and field work pertaining to these sessions performed by a crew leader (CL), CL assistants, and numerous listers. The trip was very pleasant and informative. I feel that I gained a vast knowledge of block canvassing procedures.

### BLOCK CANVASSING OBSERVATION

Upon arrival at the office on Tuesday, I began attending the three day lister training course. There were three crews of listers scheduled to start training on this day. The crew I chose to observe included 18 trainees, a CL, and a CL assistant. In talking to the office recruiter, I found out that an additional 12 crews, scattered across various sites in Las Vegas, were scheduled to begin training on the following day. In all, the Las Vegas office was expecting to hire just under 300 listers to canvass 662 assignment areas (AA) for the operation.

Overall, the training was quite thorough. The presentation of the material was done almost exclusively by the CL, with occasional help from the CL assistant. The CL was a former teacher and did an excellent job, even using examples of her experiences from previous census operations as a gauge on what the listers should expect in the field. The CL assistant, on the other hand, kept her eyes glued to the training manual while reading it and often appeared a little uncertain when asked questions. In observing the crew during the in-class training, I saw some trainees who seemed confused by the information which was presented. Because of this confusion, I believed that a few of them may drop out of the training after the first day. However, all 18 trainees ended up completing the entire lister training course.

A formal schedule was followed to make sure that the crew made it through every topic and exercise in the three day period. The training ran from roughly 9 am to 4 pm each day. The crew I observed was a little ahead of schedule once the first day was complete, but fell behind on the second day after the listers became more knowledgeable with the operation and began asking more questions. They inquired about specific situations which appeared to go against typical canvassing procedures, as well as several other questions, most of which were answered later in the training. After meeting for a brief time on the final day of training, each person went into the field with a partner for approximately two hours to test their understanding of the material covered. In observing this field work, I initially found that the lister which I accompanied did not give out the Privacy Act statements on a regular basis. I noticed that the lister was trying to work a little too fast, often causing her to attempt to verify an incorrect address with the respondent. I believe the lister went beyond a reasonable range in searching for HUs in several cases, even trying to walk through fence gates to see into the backyard of some properties. The lister's overly aggressive actions seemed to be on the verge of trespassing.

Once the two hour field practice was finished, everyone met back at the office to discuss how the canvassing went. As a whole, the morale of the entire crew was pretty good after the field work. Even though most listers ran into uncooperative respondents, they felt that the respondents who were friendly and helpful made the job quite pleasant. The number of HUs each two-person group verified within the two hour period ranged from about 25 to 150. The lister whom I observed covered three blocks, confirming 51 housing units and adding nine more which didn't appear on the address listing pages of the AA binder.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE OBSERVATION

On Friday, February 26, I observed a two hour QA training course taught by a field operation supervisor. The training reviewed information on performing the various quality checks, including the initial and weekly observations of each lister and especially the dependent QA review of every AA. It was attended by select people from the lister training who were chosen by every CL. These people were then designated as CL assistants, and were expected to help reduce the workload on the CL.

For the most part, the QA training was good. The instructor made sure to take his time explaining the information and answer questions. However, I think that the session could have been a little more thorough. An exercise for QA, similar to the field work done during the lister training, would have been very helpful. Although this would have made for a longer training session, I believe that it would have provided a better knowledge of the QA process. Essentially, I think this type of exercise might have eliminated the vagueness that many of the QA trainees felt after the completion of the training.

During my last two days, I observed some of the QA work being performed. In the mornings, every lister met one-on-one with either the CL or CL assistant to review the work done in the AA binder and to have their time sheets signed and collected from the previous day. This interaction, which took place at a coffee shop, also allowed the listers to express any questions or concerns. By the time this first meeting with the CL took place, nearly half of the listers had already finished their AAs. Therefore, initial and weekly observations were not done on these binders and it was left up to the dependent QA to determine the accuracy of those AAs. In the afternoons, these dependent QA reviews were being done by one of the CL assistants.

In order to perform the dependent QA, a random number table must be used. This table is the primary source in finding the address where a QA review begins within each AA binder. The review begins at two random addresses as determined by the number table. Once complete, the AA is given a '*pass*' or '*fail*' rating depending on the amount of errors found from the review. If the binder passes, it is handed over to people within the office to inspect. If the binder fails, the entire AA must be recanvassed.

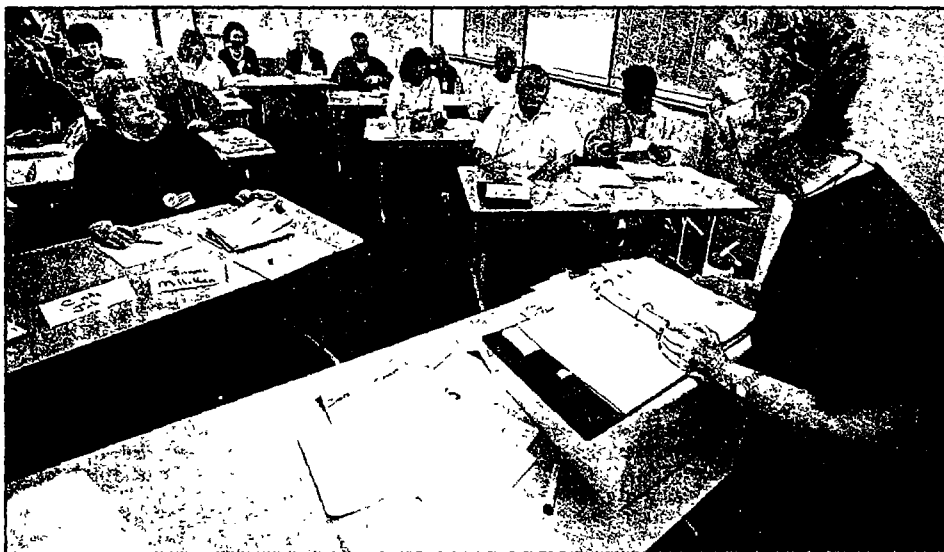
The first AA that the CL assistant reviewed went very smoothly. The random starts both ended up within the same apartment complex which the lister had marked for deletion in the original canvass. In reviewing the area, we found that the addresses did not exist within that block and were correctly deleted from the address listing pages. Hence, the binder received a '*pass*' rating because there were no errors in the work done by the lister. The next AA proved to be more difficult. The CL assistant found the first random start to correspond to a HU. During this review, we found no errors in the lister's examination of the block. After determining the second beginning point for this same AA, we found the starting address difficult to locate. The maps that were provided were very unclear and in need of updates. Once we felt pretty sure that we were in the right area, we decided to quickly walk around what we thought to be the correct block even before starting the second part of the QA review. In walking this block, we compared the units on the ground to those that were listed in the AA binder. We found that we were, indeed, in the proper block. However, we also found that there was a group of 22 townhouses that were not added by the Lister in the original canvass. Therefore, we ended up locating these 22 units by chance and determined that the townhouses would not have been located by the QA process. We then wrote down these addresses so that they could be added to the AA binder, and the CL assistant made the decision that this entire AA should be recanvassed.

## OTHER THOUGHTS/SPECIFIC CONCERNS

- The operations going on at the Las Vegas office seemed to be receiving excellent coverage by the media. While I was there, I saw reports on two separate television channels and an article in a newspaper alerting the general public that listers were collecting address information for Census 2000. (See Attachment)
- From my observation, it seemed that the CL was trying to handle an enormous amount of responsibility when she could have delegated more of the work between the CL assistants.
- In talking to a field technician from the Denver Regional Office, I found that he was concerned and a little frustrated about the lack of guidelines for QA. He thought that the dependent QA section of the CL training guide was somewhat hard to understand. He also noted that the people working in the office ended up bringing together information from several different resources to use as the main materials for the QA training sessions.
- The office I visited didn't receive a supply of forms for the QA reviews until the end of the first week. Although the crew I followed didn't need them until the beginning of the second week, I thought that this was an important detail that could have turned into a potential problem.
- According to the office recruiter, the environment for the initial competency test to become a block canvass lister was very poor. Several people arrived late, which made it very bothersome to those who were already involved in the test. As well, when a person was deemed to have scores high enough to be a potential lister, they were often given only two or three days advance notice to attend the in-class training.
- Because there are a large amount of people moving to the Las Vegas area, new buildings were being constructed all over the district. This made for interesting stories from the listers on what steps they had to go through to track down information on those buildings. However, this also created extra work for the listers when there was no knowledgeable person readily available at the construction site.

## Attachment

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Clint Karlson/Review-Journal

Census Bureau instructor Carol Spencer reviews training materials Tuesday with a group of workers who will hit the streets today to begin logging addresses in advance of the 2000

Census. The bureau will dispatch hundreds of enumerators throughout urban Clark County during the next six weeks to build a complete list of households.

## Compiling addresses starts preparation for 2000 census

By Shaun McKinnon  
Review-Journal

Hundreds of U.S. Census Bureau workers will hit the streets of Las Vegas beginning today to do the legwork for next year's national head count.

For now, the workers — or enumerators, as they're called in the business — will be more interested in the numbers on the side of your house than the number of people you have inside.

"Our goal is to find every address in the metropolitan area," said Ken Johnson, manager of the Census Bureau's Las Vegas office.

Yes, he said *every* address, from the more than 600,000 known to exist now to the 800 new addresses that pop up each month here in the fastest-growing region of the country.

It's a task as ambitious as it sounds, but it's critical if the bureau is to distribute census forms to every occupied household when the actual count gets under way a little over a year from now. To get it done, the bureau will dispatch about 300 workers in metropolitan Las Vegas; to finish the process next year, the agency will have to hire some 3,800 people statewide.

The door-to-door address survey — expected to take about six weeks — will be used along with information from city and county planning departments and past census records to compile a complete-as-possible list of those households.

The first group of about 240

enumerators began training Monday and will start field work today, knocking on every third door to ask a couple of basic — and the Census Bureau believes unintrusive — questions.

"They'll ask, 'Is this the right address?'" Johnson said, "which may sound like a dumb question, but we need to know. Then they'll ask whether it's the only address in the building and whether the address next door is also a single-family dwelling."

The workers, who carry official identification, won't ask for names or any other personal information. This is just an attempt to compile an address list; the actual census forms are sent to a household address, not to a specific individual.

That fact probably makes conducting a census in the nation's growth capital slightly less overwhelming than it might seem, Johnson said. While there are almost 6,000 people moving to Las Vegas each month and an additional 2,000 or so leaving, the Census Bureau cares only about who lives here when the forms are sent out in March 2000.

"Wherever they are on April 1, 2000, that's where they get counted," he said, which simplifies, for example, what to do with the snowbirds, the valley's flock of seasonal residents.

Johnson said the bureau is more concerned about accurately counting people who can easily slip through the demographic cracks — the homeless, undocumented workers,

inner-city residents.

"Hispanics were greatly undercounted last time, by about 2.3 percent," he said. "We are working very hard to solve that problem."

Enumerators are hired by ZIP codes so they are more likely to know the neighborhoods, and the bureau also is enlisting community groups and elected officials to ensure a full count.

An accurate count is important, Johnson said, for several reasons. Nevada, which has led the nation in growth for 13 years, is in line to earn a third seat in the House of Representatives based on the 2000 Census.

Census figures also help determine the level of federal funding for state and local governments. The Commerce Department estimates Nevada was undercounted by about 29,000 in 1990, costing the state as much as \$20 million over the past decade.

With that kind of power and money at stake, it's little wonder the bureau takes such pains to compile a complete address list, one that will include homes that aren't even built yet. To that end, the bureau works closely with planning departments, having collected, by Johnson's count, about 1,800 neighborhood maps so far.

The address list will be used to send out census forms in March 2000. Census Bureau workers then will visit households that don't return the forms and attempt to collect the needed information in person.